

GEORGE W. GREEN.

A Story of the New England Fourth of July.

My earliest remembered view of George Washington Green revealed him as the artist rather than the hero. He was inflicting original designs in fresco upon the ceiling of the orthodox church. In my youthful mind this work imparted something of sanctity to his character, though in reality it detracted seriously from that of the edifice. Mr. Green became to me a man above the ordinary, partly because he had been thought good enough to paint a church, but more because he could stand upon a high, swinging ladder and chew tobacco as calmly as if he had been on the firm floor. I was dimly conscious that such courage must command some honor in the world, and I took speedy occasion to ask my father whether Mr. Green had ever been captain of anything, or perhaps First Selectman of the town.

"Mr. Green needs no such honors," replied my father. "He is the George Washington of Rockport."

This answer filled me with a lively curiosity about George Washington, which my father gratified with a hundred stories. I came to know the great patriot very well, considering my years; and the American boy who does not admire him is a mistake of nature. As to Mr. Green's right to be called the George Washington of Rockport, I suppose that his name and the fortitude with which he bore the peril of high places, sufficiently established it. The literal interpretation did not come to me until the following Fourth of July.

On the morning of that day George Washington Green took down the sword of Bunker Hill from the wall of his kitchen, and with its dented edge lopped off the last five letters of his name. Green no longer, but George Washington in all his glory, he rode forth in full uniform and took his station at the head of the procession. My eyes were dazzled by the sight of him. I thought there was a halo round his continental hat. I began to understand how great a man Washington had been.

He drew his sword (which Mrs. Green always scoured with brick-dust on the evening of July 3rd); he waved it with a gesture of command; and the procession moved. I was one of the miniature sailors on the brigantine Gabriel Gray's yawlboat, which, rigged as the Ship of State, was drawn by three yoke of oxen. We sailed along near the head of the column, and I kept my eyes fixed upon Washington. I remember nothing more of the parade except that there was a man dressed as the devil, a character I admired next to that of Washington.

I was not surprised to learn afterward that Mr. Green always took the part of Washington. He was supposed to resemble the portraits of the Father of His Country. He had first assumed the roll at a masquerade ball about twenty years ago, and the likeness had impressed everybody, especially in the early part of the evening when George had been sober. Since then he had appeared as Washington on every occasion when fancy dress had been permissible, and on several others, by the accounts of his enemies.

In the next half-dozen years I saw Mr. Green as Washington about fifty times. He was especially conspicuous at "Dickens Suppers," where the creations of the novelist were embodied by the townspeople. It was considered questionable at first whether George Washington was one of Dickens' characters; but at least he is mentioned in "The Tale of the Two Cities." Mr. Green could quote the passage. No formal protest was ever entered.

Nobody ever dreamed of being his rival in those days. If Mr. Green had gone to a masquerade ball and had there found somebody else in the guise of Washington, he would have felt as the great general might had another arisen up to command his army before Yorktown. There was jealousy of course, and some sign of rebellion appeared every year just before the Fourth. But he held his place, and each succeeding year increased his fitness for it. He trained the muscles of his face; he improved the details of his "make-up," he practiced military attitudes, and especially those that were to be found in Washington's portraits. These became natural to him. I have seen him when he has been painting my father's barn, take a few minutes for rest and lean against a cow in the exact position in which Washington is shown beside his charger on the battle field.

Far more remarkable, however, was the effect of this reflected glory upon his moral nature. I was too young to understand it then, but the facts have since come to me. George W. Green was a wild fellow, to begin with, much addicted to the cup, and of a boisterous demeanor; and in a town where the teller of a sea tale never halted for the laws of nature, George was held to be a liar of the first magnitude. As a boy he shot more crows than any other boy, and most of them were white.

Just when the change in him began I can not say. Some trace it to a remark made by old Simon Gardiner at a ball on the eve of February 22d, in a year so long ago that I hate to think about it. George was in the costume of Washington for perhaps the tenth time. He was telling a wild, preposterous fish story when old Simon held him up with these words:

"Pulled in a hoss mack'el with a hand-line, did ye? Twelve foot long, was he? Well, that's purty good for the Father of His Little Hatchet!"

(Continued on Fourth Page.)

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We were almost out of those fine swing Razor Stropps, but have a new lot this steamer. We have a full line of Electrical Goods, and can wire houses for Electric Lights on short notice. Now is the time to leave your order for wiring, as in a few months the current for lights can be furnished and then everyone will want lights at once, and those whose houses are wired will of course get lights first.

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